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VI. ARCHEOLOGY.

ARCHEOLOGY OF CATALINA ISLAND.

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Read before the Academy December 29, 1900.

Out in the Pacific ocean, 20 to 100 miles off the coast of southern California, scattered along north and south, are the "channel islands." They are of igneous formation, in places volcanic, porphyry predominating, with extensive ledges of sandstone. The past summer I spent a short time on Santa Catalina, the most interesting of these islands. It is nearly all mountainous, arising abruptly from the ocean. It is sixteen miles in length by five or six in width, with an area of 55,000 acres. If it were spread out flat it would be two or three times as large.

It is owned by the Baring brothers, title coming from a Spanish grant. There is no more beautiful spot in America than the Bay of Avalon, near the southeast end of the island. In traveling over the island I found abundant evidence of ancient inhabitants, who disappeared early in this century and are lost to history. The first Portuguese ship sailing up the coast discovered the island, about A. D. 1530, and anchored in the Bay of Avalon for several weeks. They found the island inhabited, and a large village on the shore of the bay. The people were inoffensive, hospitable, and friendly.

The other islands also contained a large population of the same people, it is said, of different language and customs from the numerous people on the mainland. They made boats of skins (there being no timber of consequence on the island), with which they traversed the stormy ocean from one island to another, perhaps 100 miles apart.

In no other spot on earth was marine life more abundant, from whales down to sardines. The waters swarmed with fish; herds of seals and sea-lions covered the outlying rocks and beaches. Under water, the rocks were covered with shell-fish. The abalone seemed to be the favorite food of the natives, as shell mounds ten feet deep, locally called "clambakes," mostly of abalone shells, testify. To my surprise, I found these clambakes on the top of the mountain ridges. In a place called "Indian caves" were tons of heavy shells, carried there for food.

The northern slopes of the mountains in places were covered with a low scrub oak, not averaging over ten feet in height. Perhaps the natives made their camps high up during the acorn harvest. Heavy stone mortars are found about these clambakes, or camps, which appear to have been used through long periods of time.

The town of Avalon, a noted pleasure resort, is built on an ancient village site; and in excavating cellars quantities of stone vessels, ashes and shells are found. These clambakes appear to have been utilized as burying-grounds, as large numbers of skeletons, buried in rows or circles, are found in them.

On the eastern center of the island are quarries of steatite, or soapstone, out of which the natives had cut thousands of vessels *in situ*, a nest of vessels being cut out of one spot, ranging in size from half a pint up to ten gallons. These vessels are used to cook their food. Their mortars were made of granite boulders. Some of these vessels, made of the hardest of known rocks, were almost as true

as if turned in a lathe. Tons of these vessels have been carried away from this and other islands. I was told that in a secluded ravine, in the interior of the island, known to but few, a car-load of these stone vessels lie on the surface, most of them broken.

There are no stone spears, arrows or axes found on the island, or very few, as there were no land animals except foxes, of a variety peculiar to these islands. The natives found bone to answer their purpose; rude knives of stone were common: in fact, the natives could procure all the food they required by a curious provision of nature. The waters abounded with flying-fish; they rise out of the water when disturbed, and sail with the wind for 200 or 300 yards. Great schools of tunas, white bass and yellowtails surround the bays, driving the smaller fish toward the shore. The flying-fish, in escaping, land far up the beach, where the natives could pick them up at their leisure.

It is said that the natives worshiped the sun. I saw what was said to be a picture of the sun painted in a cave, with other designs. They were too ancient and indistinct for me to decipher. The early mission fathers sent an expedition to the island to destroy a so-called temple in which the natives worshiped.

When or how these people disappeared or perished is not known to the people now living on the coast. There is a tradition that long ago the Russians, trading for furs along the Alaskan coast, furnished the natives of that country guns and taught their use, and employed them as hunters. In the course of time they worked down along the coast of California and discovered the Channel islands, which abounded with sea-otter, the most valuable of all furs. The natives of Catalina and the neighboring islands used these skins for clothing and bedding. This excited the cupidity of the Russians, who the next year brought down several hundred of their hunters, armed with guns, and left them on the islands. Finding the natives rich in furs and powerless to defend themselves, they exterminated them. This is the story. On St. Nicholas island, eighty miles out in the ocean, a sailor of Avalon said to me he counted thirty skeletons in a row, which the violent sandstorm had uncovered, the left temple of each broken in.

Out of the drifting sands of this island boat-loads of stone implements are taken. One hundred and fifty stone mortars were taken to the World's Fair, at Chicago.

Here we find once populous islands on our coast, of the origin of whose people or their fate we know nothing. Perhaps a pestilence destroyed them, as it did many thousands of natives on the upper Missouri river in 1837.

The statement, so often seen emanating from semiofficial sources, that there are as many Indians now in the United States as when the continent was discovered, and that they are not decreasing in numbers, is utterly at variance with the facts. The remaining 250,000 Indians are the remnant of three millions, who inhabited the territory of the United States in A. D. 1500. When first known, early in the century, the Kaw Indians numbered between 5000 and 10,000, and when I first knew them they numbered 1500; now there are but 250 left.